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The Combat Infantryman Badge, or CIB, is the infantryman's most prestigious award, next to the Medal of Honor. With U.S. infantrymen once again serving in a potentially "hot" zone of operations, questions are sure to be raised about their possible eligibility for the badge—such questions as award requirements and the number of times the badge may be awarded.

For several years, I have been gathering information about the CIB and its running mate—the Expert Infantryman Badge (EIB). With the assistance of several knowledgeable individu-

als, I have amassed a considerable amount of information that I would like to share with you.

In August 1943, Lieutenant General Leslie J. McNair's Army Ground Forces (AGF) headquarters conducted a survey of soldiers then assigned to AGF's 11 arms and services. His people discovered that among those soldiers the infantry was by far the least popular branch, even with its own members. In brief, few infantrymen at the time were happy with being in the infantry or with their current assignments.

The results of the survey were given to General George C. Marshall, the Army's Chief of Staff and an old-line infantryman himself. In mid-1943, we still had a long road to travel and many battles to fight to reach final victory, and those battles would require motivated, well-trained combat soldiers, particularly infantrymen.

Marshall asked McNair to recommend ways the infantry's prestige could be boosted and its importance as the Army's premier combat arm could be recognized. By this time, our infantry units were doing 70 percent of the fighting and dying in all active theaters of operations, and Marshall knew the road ahead would require even greater sacrifices from the combat infantrymen. Something had to be done to improve their morale and effectiveness.

One of McNair's proposals called for a "fighter badge" that would be awarded to infantrymen who could meet certain standards, which were to be developed by Marshall's headquarters. Marshall approved the concept but eventually decided that instead of having one "fighter badge," there would be two individual combat badges—the EIB and the CIB.

Section I, War Department (WD) Circular 209, 27 October

1943, spelled out the details. The circular begins by stating:

*The present war has demonstrated the importance of highly proficient, tough, hard, and aggressive infantry, which can be obtained only by developing a high degree of individual all-around proficiency on the part of every infantryman. As a means of attaining the high standards desired and to foster esprit de corps in infantry units, the Expert Infantryman and Combat Infantryman badges are established for infantry personnel.*

It is interesting to note that both badges were initially considered *combat* badges. The EIB could be awarded to infantrymen, including officers, who either attained "the standards of proficiency established by the War Department" or satisfactorily performed "duty in action against the enemy." The CIB had stricter requirements; to be awarded a CIB, infantrymen, including officers, had to demonstrate "exemplary conduct in action against the enemy" or satisfactorily perform "duty in action against the enemy in a major operation as determined and announced by the theater commanders."

The award of the badges had to be made in unit orders and at an appropriate ceremony, whenever possible. The circular



Infantrymen did much of the fighting and dying in all theaters of operation during World War II. Here, PFC Carl Pierce is seen working on his light machinegun during a lull in the prolonged, bitter fighting for Okinawa in 1945.

**Infantrymen have long had the unenviable task of seeking out the enemy on his own terrain, something they are seen doing here in the Republic of Vietnam. A patrol from the 1st Cavalry Division's Troop B, 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry, pauses while the point man moves ahead of the unit.**



stressed that “only one of these badges will be worn at a time,” and that “the Combat Infantryman badge is the higher award.” Although the War Department circular was dated 27 October 1943, the EIB was not officially authorized until an executive order was issued on 11 November 1943; the CIB was officially authorized four days later, by an executive order dated 15 November 1943.

As Lieutenant Colonel William K. Emerson, U.S. Army Retired, wrote recently, the last CIB category—participation in a major operation—“was to allow for all infantrymen to receive the CIB if they participated in major invasions, although today the distinction is not clear.” (See *The Trading Post*, January-March 1995, pages 17-18.)

To the best of my knowledge, no infantryman received an EIB for “duty in action against the enemy,” and subsequent regulations specified the EIB would be restricted to infantrymen who satisfactorily completed certain stringent training requirements, while the CIB was restricted to infantrymen who satisfactorily performed their duties while in combat.

WD Circular 408, 17 October 1944, pulled together information contained in several previously issued WD 1944

circulars and spelled out further details for awarding both badges, including a provision that authorized “during the present war and for 6 months thereafter” additional compensation to those infantrymen who were awarded either the EIB or the CIB. This additional compensation amounted to \$5.00 per month for EIB holders and \$10.00 per month for CIB holders. A soldier could draw payment for one or the other but not for both at the same time. Officers were not authorized this additional compensation. These payments came about as a result of an act of Congress that was approved 30 June 1944. This act also made the payments retroactive to 1 January 1944. (A March 1944 change to the basic regulation made eligibility for the award of a CIB retroactive to 7 December 1941.) As near as I have been able to determine, such monetary awards to holders of either badge were not authorized after the stated term had expired.

Circular 408 also spelled out in greater detail the requirements individuals had to meet to be considered for the award of either badge. First, the award of the EIB and the CIB was to be “restricted to officers, warrant officers, and enlisted men assigned to infantry regiments, infantry battalions, and elements

thereof designated as infantry in tables of organization or tables of organization and equipment.”

The EIB could be awarded to infantrymen who “attained the standards of proficiency established by the War Department,” while the CIB could be awarded for “satisfactory performance of duty in ground combat against the enemy.” The latter was a distinct change to the original 1943 standards, and an attempt to clarify them.

Despite the opinion of many combat infantrymen, Army regulations issued during World War II never prescribed a specific period of time a man had to serve in combat in an infantry unit to be eligible for the CIB. This has not prevented some from believing there was a specified time involved; the usual time I have heard is 30 days. I have not been able to find a reference to such a period in any official regulation I have seen.

Today, these are the requirements an individual must meet to be considered for a CIB:

- The CIB may be awarded only to members of the United States Army.
  - A soldier must be an Army infantry or special forces officer (CMF 11 or 18) in the grade of colonel or below, or an Army enlisted soldier or an Army warrant officer with an infantry or special forces MOS. He must satisfactorily perform his duty while assigned or attached to an infantry, ranger, or special forces unit of brigade, regiment, or smaller size during any period of time the unit is engaged in active ground combat.
  - A soldier must be personally present and under fire while serving in an assigned infantry or special forces primary duty position in a unit actively engaged in ground combat with the enemy. The unit in question can be of any size smaller than a brigade. As an example, a soldier with an infantry MOS serving in a rifle squad of a cavalry platoon in a cavalry troop would be eligible for the CIB, provided his squad had been in active ground combat with the enemy during the period of time for which the award was made.
  - The infantry or special forces Special Skill Identifier (SSI) or MOS does not necessarily have to be the soldier’s primary specialty, so long as he has been properly trained in infantry or special forces tactics, has the appropriate skill code, and is serving in that specialty when engaged in active ground combat against the enemy. Commanders are not authorized to make any exceptions to this policy.
  - General officers and members of headquarters companies of units larger than a brigade cannot be awarded a CIB.
- As of this writing, a separate award of the CIB has been

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*AUTHOR’S NOTE: I have extracted generously from certain official U.S. Army regulations and circulars. Copies of a number of these documents were given to me by Lieutenant Colonel William K. Emerson, United States Army, Retired. Others were acquired for me by the Public Affairs Office, U.S. Army Infantry Center, and by the office of the Historian, U.S. Army Infantry School. The staff of the National Infantry Museum has also been most helpful in seeking out needed information. My heartfelt appreciation to all of these fine people.*

authorized for qualified soldiers who took part in any of these three conflicts:

- World War II (7 December 1941 to 3 September 1945).
- The Korean Conflict (27 June 1950 to 27 July 1953).
- The Vietnam Conflict (1 March 1961 to 30 April 1975).

Service in any one of these conflicts, combined with qualifying service in Laos (19 April 1961 to 6 October 1962), the Dominican Republic (28 April 1965 to 1 September 1966), Korea on the demilitarized zone (DMZ) (after 4 January 1969), Grenada (23 October to 21 November 1983), Panama (20 December 1989 to 31 January 1990), the Persian Gulf War (17 January to 11 April 1991), and Somalia (5 June 1993 to 3 March 1995), is recognized by one award, whether a soldier served one or more tours of duty in any or all of those areas.

To clarify: An infantry soldier who earned a CIB during World War II could earn a second CIB for combat service during the Korean Conflict and a third for combat service during the Vietnam Conflict. But if he earned a CIB during the Vietnam War, he could not be awarded a second CIB for service in the Dominican Republic or in any of the other listed operations. Additionally, an infantryman who was awarded a CIB for combat service in the Grenada operation could not be awarded a second CIB for service, say, in the Persian Gulf War or in Somalia.

In brief, no combat infantryman has yet been awarded more than three CIBs. To earn these three awards, an infantryman would have had to see combat service in World War II, the Korean Conflict, and the Vietnam Conflict. It remains to be seen whether service in Bosnia will qualify for a fourth award. (As of 31 August 1994, the National Infantry Museum had a total of 297 names on its list of three-time CIB recipients.)

(Some people have asked me what the CIB would look like if a future infantryman earned a *fifth* award. For the fifth through the eighth awards, the regulations state that the outline of the badge, the musket, the wreath, and the color of the stars would change from silver to a gold. The fifth award, then, would be “a polished gold musket on a rectangular blue background  $\frac{7}{16}$ -inch high and 3 inches long in front of an oak wreath of shaded gold.” The sixth through eighth awards would be indicated by the addition of gold stars to the gold-hued badge.)

Special provisions in the regulations apply only to service in Laos, the Republic of Vietnam, and Korea on the DMZ. For example, in Laos for the period from 19 April 1961 to 6 October 1962, an infantryman must have served as follows:

- As an assigned member of a White Star Mobile Training Team while the team was attached to or working with a unit or regiment (*groupment mobile*) or smaller size of the *Forces Armee du Royaume* (FAR), or with irregular type forces of regiment size or smaller, or
- As a member of MAAG-Laos, he must have been assigned as an advisor to the FAR region or zone or as an advisor to irregular forces of regiment size or smaller.
- In both of the above cases, the infantryman must have been personally under hostile fire while performing his duties as spelled out above.
- Any officer, warrant officer, or enlisted man whose branch was other than infantry who, under appropriate orders, was as-

signed to a White Star Mobile Training Team or to MAAG-Laos was considered eligible for the award of a CIB provided he met all of the other requirements.

The special provisions in the regulations concerning duty in the Vietnam Conflict for which a CIB could be awarded include the following:

- Subsequent to 1 March 1961, an infantry soldier assigned as an advisor to the Vietnamese infantry unit, ranger unit, infantry-type unit of regimental or smaller size of the civil guard, an infantry-type unit of regimental or smaller size of the self-defense corps—or to an irregular force comparable in size to those listed above during any period that unit was engaged in actual ground combat—was eligible for the CIB. The advisor, however, must have been personally present and under fire while serving in an assigned primary duty as a member of a tactical advisory team while the unit participated in ground combat.

- Any officer whose basic branch was other than infantry but who, under appropriate orders, commanded a line infantry (other than a headquarters) unit of brigade, regimental, or smaller size for at least 30 consecutive days was deemed to have been detailed to the infantry and was eligible for the CIB. Of course, he had to meet all the other award requirements.

- Any officer, warrant officer, or enlisted man whose branch was other than infantry and who, under appropriate orders, performed advisory, liaison, or training duties with Vietnamese, South Korean, or Thai units was considered eligible for the CIB, provided he met all the other requirements.

For duty in Korea on the DMZ subsequent to 4 January 1969, these are the special requirements found in the regulations:

- An infantry soldier must have served in the hostile fire area for at least 60 days and be authorized to draw hostile fire pay.

- He must have been assigned to an infantry unit of company or smaller size and be an infantry officer in the grade of captain or lower, or a warrant officer or enlisted man with an infantry MOS. An officer whose basic branch was other than infantry who, under appropriate orders, commanded an infantry company or smaller size infantry unit for at least 30 days,

could be awarded a CIB if he met all the other requirements.

- He must have been engaged with an enemy involving an exchange of small arms fire at least five times.

- He must have been personally recommended by each commander in his chain of command and approved at division level. If a soldier was killed as a result of enemy action, the five-engagement rule and the 60-day requirement were waived. If a soldier was wounded, the two requirements were waived if it could be clearly established that his wound was a direct result of overt hostile action.

Another special requirement in the regulations should be of interest to some:

- After 1 December 1967 for the Vietnam Conflict and after 4 January 1969 for Korea on the DMZ, noncommissioned officers serving as command sergeants major of infantry battalions and brigades for at least 30 consecutive days in a combat or hostile fire zone could be awarded a CIB if they met all the other award requirements.

Perhaps it is because of these kinds of time provisions in the regulations that some combat infantrymen believe a specified time period governs the award of all EIBs in all situations.

Many of the young infantrymen in Bosnia today would undoubtedly like to have CIBs. One can only hope they will not have the opportunity to prove their combat worth, for the cost of the blue badge with wreath is never cheap. More than 200 U.N. Protection Force soldiers died in Bosnia and some 1,200 more were wounded during the four years of “humanitarian” operations. Many of those U.N. soldiers were infantrymen.

The 1993 battle in Mogadishu, Somalia, should serve as a stark reminder to U.S. infantrymen of what can happen in far-away places while serving on what are supposed to be missions of peace.

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